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ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT

**THE CONSECRATION
OF
ROCK HILL CEMETERY,**

ON

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 4, 1853,

BY

SAMUEL WOLCOTT.

ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT

THE CONSECRATION

OF

Rock Hill Cemetery,

IN

FOXBOROUGH, MASS.,

ON

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 4TH, 1853.

BY REV. SAMUEL WOLCOTT,

OF PROVIDENCE, R. I.

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PROVIDENCE:

M. B. YOUNG & COMPANY, PRINTERS,
4 Union Buildings.

1853.

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1855 Aug 15
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Rev Mrs W. H. Huggins
of Worcester

FOXBOROUGH, Oct. 13th, 1853.

REV. SAMUEL WOLOOTT,

Providence, R. I.

DEAR SIR :

At a meeting of the FOXBORO' CEMETERY CORPORATION, held at Cocasset House, Tuesday, Oct. 11th, 1853, it was

ORDERED, That the thanks of the Corporation be presented to the Rev. SAMUEL WOLCOTT, for his able and appropriate Address, delivered at the Consecration of ROCK HILL CEMETERY, Tuesday, Oct. 4th, 1853, and that he be respectfully requested to furnish a copy of the same for publication.

By order of the Trustees,

R. W. KERR, *Clerk.*

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DELIVERED AT

**THE CONSECRATION
OF
ROCK HILL CEMETERY,**

ON

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 4, 1853,

BY

SAMUEL WOLCOTT.

And her first-born son, whose 'bow abode in strength,' and on whose head 'rested the blessings of the Mighty God of Jacob,' is honored in his death, as in his life, with a grateful remembrance. 'By faith, Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel, and gave commandment concerning his bones.' They were not forgotten in the haste of leaving Egypt by night, and were carefully kept by Moses during the wanderings in the wilderness; they were carried by Joshua into the heart of the country, and deposited in a sepulchre near the base of Mount Gerizim, in the parcel of ground which Jacob had given to Joseph as a portion above his brethren. The spot has been held in equal regard, as the sepulchre of a prophet, by Jews, Christians, and Muslims; and there the remains of this honored servant of God have slept undisturbed by the storms of more than three thousand years. The eye of the Saviour, as he talked with the woman of Samaria at the well, rested upon this tomb; its white modern dome now attracts the eye of the traveler from a distance, as he crosses the contiguous plain; and for ages to come, to the end of time, this mute memorial shall speak to the heart of the observer who passes that way, silently uttering its impressive lessons of filial fidelity, of fraternal affection, and of providential goodness.

The earliest and purest examples on record, my friends, thus confirm the suggestions of your own hearts, and countenance the undertaking which you happily consummate to-day—the selection and consecration of a permanent burial-place, which will always be respected as the home of the dead, and where the living may perpetuate, by monumental tablets, the memories of departed friends.

An ancient eastern benediction, which has waked an echo in every age and clime, is expressed in the words, "May you die among your kindred!" The dissolution of 'the earthly house of our tabernacle' is formidable to every natural feeling, and we shrink instinctively from the dread process. It is an alleviation which we naturally crave, that it may please the sovereign Disposer of all events, to grant us individually a tranquil death, in the bosom of an endeared home, surrounded with the sympathies of the family, and soothed by the ministries of affection.

"On some fond breast the parting soul relies ;
Some pious drops the closing eye requires ;
E'en from the tomb the voice of nature cries ;
E'en in our ashes live their wonted fires."

We naturally, also, wish our ashes to rest with kindred dust ; pleasant is the anticipation of being joined in burial with those with whom we have been united in life by sweet and sacred bonds. And this desire and hope have doubtless, my friends, operated as an incentive to your own efforts, in the steps which you have taken with reference to this spot.

And what lessons shall we receive from this scene ? What impressions shall we bear away from this ceremony ? It is no lively pageant which has called us together ; neither is the service invested with gloom. If we properly estimate the occasion, sacred and rare, it will impress our minds with a calm seriousness, and with earnest, though cheerful views of life and its responsibilities and duties. We have come hither to-day in lengthened procession ; but not with badges of mourning, nor with the bier of the dead. Your Band have led us through the streets of the

village and the avenues of the cemetery with solemn and soul-stirring strains ; but not with muffled drum, nor with funereal dirges. Beneath the arches of this grove, God's own temple, your Choir have lifted to Heaven the glorious anthem ; but they chant to-day no requiem for the departed. And yet the moral effect of all the funeral trains which are destined to find their way to this hallowed retreat, in coming years, seems to be concentrated on this hour. So far as the moral influence of the occasion may depend on these remarks, I desire that it may be associated in your minds with sentiments and feelings, which you may pleasantly and profitably recall in your future visits to this spot ; especially when impelled hither by the promptings of bereaved affection, such as were ascribed to the disconsolate sister of Lazarus in the remark, 'she goeth to the grave to weep there.' I also desire that it may be connected with thoughts and purposes, which, with God's blessing, may assist you at the appointed hour to lie down to your own rest here,

—“sustained and soothed
By an unfaltering trust.”

Viewed in this light, the lessons, whether of instruction or of consolation, obviously commended to us, are those with which we are the most familiar, but which cannot be slighted at such a moment as this, inasmuch as they are also the most important and urgent.

'I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living.' Such was the confession of an eastern pilgrim and patriarch, uttered more than thirty centuries ago. He died and was laid in his grave, and the places of his birth and sepulture are alike un-

known. But the truth which he uttered in its individual application, remains a universal law of humanity. The celestial bodies on which he gazed, as we now do—the sun, the moon, and the constellations, ‘Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades,’ on which he wrote their present names—still hang in the firmament, and hold on their course. Beneath their light, the unnumbered hosts of a hundred generations have since his day marched on, with a steady tramp, to their final halting-place ; till

——“ all that tread
The globe are but a handful to the tribes
That slumber in its bosom.”

And countless generations more may follow in our steps, when we and ours shall have been swept away, and ages of oblivion shall have rolled over us. But to each one of the living, in every age, this truth remains, “I know that thou wilt bring me to death and the grave.” All else in our future experience is to us unknown and doubtful ; this one fact is indubitably certain. Count the persons congregated here to-day, and you will count as many funeral processions, now visible to the eye of God, winding from their respective dwellings. The Macedonian monarch, who made it the daily office of one of his attendants to repeat in his ear the sentence, “Philip, remember that thou art mortal!” must have been, like too many others, a thoughtless observer of the world around him, to have needed such a mentor. We read this truth in our own frames, and discover, at every step, fresh mementos of it. As I look over this large assembly, and then upward to the overspreading branches, with their pendent leaves, now waving in the sunlight, but already touched by the frost, and soon to wither and fall to the earth, I am met with an

affecting emblem of our mortal destiny. 'We all do fade as a leaf.' The chilling blasts of life's autumn will lay us as low as they; and thus are the voices of nature perpetually calling to us and proclaiming our mortality. 'Man cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down.'

We are reminded of the brevity of life, as well as of its certain and often sudden termination. 'Our days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle; swifter than a post they flee away; they are passed away as the swift ships; as the eagle that hasteth to the prey.' We are floating on the current, like the bubbles on the bosom of a rapid stream, glittering for an instant in the sunbeams, and successively vanishing forever. 'Man dieth and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?' It was a striking observation of an aged monk, who had passed a long life in the cloisters of a convent, and seen its inmates constantly changing, pointing to the old portraits that had hung for generations on the walls, "I often think that *they* are the real occupants, the living dwellers here, and that we are but paintings, semblances and shadows." 'Our days on earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding; our age is as nothing before God; verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity.' The young, the strong, and the robust, as well as the feeble and aged, are passing away by death, and there is no hour which is not free to his visitation.

"Leaves have their time to fall,
And flowers to wither at the north wind's breath,
And stars to set—but all,
Thou hast all seasons for thine own, O Death."

I have seen a maiden decked with garlands, in the flush and pomp of health and beauty, the pride of an admiring

circle ; and before the fresh flowers had withered, the bloom of life had faded from her cheek, her elegant attire was exchanged for the snowy shroud, and the chaplet which had circled and graced her brow was a wreath for her tomb.

No lesson is more impressively taught us here, than the emptiness of earthly things. Amid the cares and agitations of a brief existence, we are forcibly reminded of the inevitable end of all sublunary schemes and enterprises. Historians have recorded of the renowned Saracen chieftain, that, when he lay dying in his capital, he gave orders that upon his decease his shroud should be borne on a soldier's spear through the streets of Damascus, preceded by a herald, proclaiming with a loud voice, "This is all that remains of Saladin, the mighty Conqueror of the East!" No incident could more vividly illustrate the inspired declaration, 'we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.' Our principles, our characters, are our only abiding possession. With this truth, permit me to say, I was most deeply impressed, as others have been, on an afternoon which I once passed in the mausoleum of Britain's departed monarchs and nobles, her heroes and worthies—Westminster Abbey. In that inclosure were garnered the mortal remains of an empire's genius, greatness and glory, and their marble effigies stood clustered there in impressive muteness. I wandered among those silent monuments ; I stood upon the dust of kings, who had lorded it over prostrate realms, whose ambition had convulsed a continent, and almost started the "fast-anchored isle" from her moorings ; of poets, who had "woke to ecstasy the living lyre" ; of statesmen and orators, who had thundered in the halls of legislation ;

of warriors, who had made the "meteor flag" burn terrific on the deep and on the land. What now to them were crowns and sceptres, coronets, titles, and banners; the achievements of eloquence and song; the exploits of science and valor? Here were compressed into "handfuls of earth" all that had survived, save the immaterial and spiritual; and I lingered in profitable musings on the vanity of earthly renown, until the heavy organ pealed the notes of a solemn chant through the cloistered recesses, bearing my thoughts forward to the time, when all the stately structures which were standing in queenly beauty around me,

"The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which doth it inherit, shall dissolve,
And like the baseless fabric of a vision,
Leave not a wreck behind."

We may gather lessons, equally affecting, of the instability of earth and the value of a steadfast hope of heaven alone, from humbler cemeteries, and sincerer if ruder memorials. I have spent the twilight hour as solemnly and profitably in the village church-yard of New-England, where the early shepherds repose, 'each in his own house,' and where by their sides the keeper hath made their flocks to rest, noon and night;—in those silent, sepulchral chambers, the breastworks of society all leveled, its passions all hushed, 'joined with them in burial,' and awaiting an associated rising in the morning of the resurrection.

The voices of nature and of revelation are rehearsing in concert the theme of our mortality, and as you tread upon this earth to-day, my friends, you are reminded of "the

long repose" which you are soon to take in its bosom. But the occasion also offers to our meditations another and a glorious truth, proclaimed with equal authority and emphasis, and appealing to our strongest sympathies and hopes :—

"Man, thou shalt never die ! Celestial voices
Hymn it unto our souls ; according harps,
By angel fingers touched when the mild stars
Of morning sang together, sound forth still
The song of our great Immortality ;
Thick clustering orbs, and this our fair domain,
The tall, dark mountains, and the deep-toned seas,
Join in this solemn, universal song.
O listen ye, our spirits, drink it in
From all the air ! 'Tis in the gentle moonlight ;
'Tis floating mid day's setting glories. Night,
Wrapped in her sable robe, with silent step
Comes to our bed, and breathes it in our ears ;
Night, and the dawn, bright day, and thoughtful eve,
All time, all bounds, the limitless expanse,
As one vast mystic instrument, are touched
By an unseen, living hand, and conscious chords
Quiver with joy in this great jubilee.
The dying hear it ; and as sounds of earth
Grow dull and distant, wake their passing souls
To mingle in this heavenly harmony."

The longings of the soul for immortality, its quenchless aspirations, have in all ages forced upon mankind the conviction, or at least the surmise, that it was a deathless principle—would survive the wreck of matter, and live on forever. But the doctrine of the resurrection of the body—a truth inseparable from it in our cherished regards—though eagerly welcomed by the mind when suggested, is not a dictate of nature, but purely the teaching of revelation. 'For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.' The ancient

philosophers, in all their researches, never discovered this truth. Their faint glimpses of a higher and brighter sphere, in which the spirit might expatiate when released from the body, threw no light on the destiny of the entire man, and did not relieve the darkness of the sepulchre. Their ideas, vague and conjectural at the best, embraced the soul alone, and it never once occurred to them that its material companion could aspire to an ethereal dignity and the honors of immortality. The analogies of nature, forcible as they may seem to us, now that we are familiar with the truth, never suggested it to them. They had seen the seed fall upon the earth, and the green grain wave over its decay. They had seen the reptile throw off its exuviae, and float in beauty on the air. But in these and the like instances, they saw but the successive stages of one economy, whose processes were constant, and visible, and soon completed; and it were quite beyond the reach of the mind unaided, to found on such analogy any connection between the present dispensation and a future, or ever to conjecture, that in the dust committed to dust there exist rudiments which shall hereafter germinate and bloom in Paradise.

It was a favorite theory with the ancient Gnostics, that matter was the source of all evil, and they accordingly treated it with disdain. In the spirit, perhaps, of that philosophy, the body, as material, is sometimes spoken of by way of contrast and disparagement, in terms which seem to me neither scriptural nor rational. Man, we must remember, is a compound being, consisting of soul and body. He differs from the animal creation, in that he possesses a spiritual subsistence, unquenchable and unconquerable. He differs from the pure spirits, in that this

ethereal principle is clothed with a bodily form. He is human, and not angelic ; he is human, and not brutish.—The immaterial part survives, intelligent and active, though under what conditions we know not, when the material part is dissolved. But soul and body united constitute the human person ; and by insuring their re-union, after separation by death, the Saviour ‘hath brought life and immortality to light.’

And while we are allowed the rich consolation of knowing that for the justified to be ‘absent from the body’ is to be ‘present with the Lord,’ is to be ‘in Paradise,’ still I cannot but think the anticipation of being re-united with her earthly companion a joyful one to the spirit in her separate state.

“Does she there no fond emotion,
Naught of earthly love retain ?
Or, absorbed in pure devotion,
Does no mortal trace remain ?
Can the grave those ties dis sever,
With the very heart-strings twined ?
Must she part, and part forever,
With the friend she leaves behind ?

No ! the past she still remembers ;
Faith and hope surviving too,
Ever watch those sleeping embers,
Which must rise and live anew ;
For the widowed, lonely spirit
Waits till she be clothed afresh ;
Longs perfection to inherit,
And to triumph in the flesh.”

‘Not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon ;’
not that we desire a state of pure incorporeity, but would
gladly exchange the natural for the spiritual body.

I have said that this material organization is a constituent part and element of the individual man. And where, but in the invisible structure of the soul itself, do you recognize such proofs of the handy-work of God? Are we not 'fearfully and wonderfully made?' Whatever of dignity you attach to the spirit is shared by the body.—This is the inlet of every sensation which thrills it; it is the outlet of all the emotions and sympathies which pervade it. It is the channel of its feelings, its organ of communication with the world in which it dwells. I look upon one whose orb of vision is sightless; and with a heart alive to the beauties of nature, I see the glories of the landscape and the firmament spread around him without awakening an emotion, because of a single defect in the material structure. I look upon one whose sense of hearing has been extinguished; and with a soul of melody and song, the music of creation falls on his ear unheeded, because of a minute derangement of the corporeal system. And I learn something of the exquisite finish and high value of the framework which incases the spirit.

I have said that the doctrine of the resurrection is to us a most welcome truth. Strange and sad it would be, if this elaborate and beautiful mechanism, this master-piece of the Divine Architect, were thus moulded and wrought, to be finally shattered, and disfigured, and cast off as worthless; that the tender plant of humanity, which has faded in its blossom, should have an existence as transient as the flower of the field, which lifts itself into momentary sunshine, and is swept away by the wind; that the form which had ripened into grace and loveliness, and around which the warm affections of the heart had clustered, should fall beneath the shaft of the destroyer, with no

higher destiny than the clod of the valley ; that the delicate instrument of the soul, which had sent forth its tones like a harp, must be crushed and mute forever. To save us from such a doom, blessed be God ! the Redeemer 'was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.' With such a home for the believing spirit, and such a pledge for the dying body—rest for the former in the bosom of Jesus, and the final recovery of the latter from the dishonors of corruption—we can cheerfully commend the one 'to God who gave it,' and calmly commit the other 'to the earth as it was;' knowing that 'that which is sown is not quickened except it die;' that this is a necessary stage towards its consummation and perfection ; and that "beauty immortal shall awake from the tomb."

The familiar truths just glanced at, which are forced upon our reflections by this solemnity, and have demanded this passing reference—the universality of death, the brevity of life, the vanity of the world, the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body—are doctrines of vital import, involving earnest practical duties. No occasion, no gathering, could enforce with more power and pathos than this, the exhortation of the wise Preacher, 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might ; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.' The grave speaks a language which needs no interpreter to the living, and yet how insensible are we to its monitory voice ! I was once called to perform the burial-service at sea ; and when the body was consigned to the deep, and the waves closed

over it, I was impressed by observing how quickly after the plunge all was again composed,

“And the sea rolled on, as it rolled before.”

And I thought it but a striking emblem of death, wherever it occurs, on the ocean or on the land. It makes but a transient ripple on the surface of the heaving tide of human existence. Except in cases of intimate relationship and dependence, the death of any one of us will not interrupt the daily plans and pursuits of the others. To the survivors, life will “roll on as it rolled before,” until each in turn is called to follow. But if we heed the lessons suggested, the event, if it does not turn us from our usual avocations, will invariably send us to them with higher purposes and better feelings. We shall return successively, those of us that are spared, from the grave of the one freshly fallen, with a more earnest desire, in the cultivation of our own hearts, and the discharge of our duties to the living, to fulfil the high behests of Heaven. Each departing friend will be to us an angel of mercy ; and every new instance of mortality, as a memento of our own, will repeat to us, with the power of a personal appeal, the injunction, ‘Therefore, be ye also ready ; for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh. ‘Be ye ready,’ my friends, and God’s messenger will wear to you no frowning aspect. ‘Be ye ready,’ and the summons shall be welcome ; whether sent ‘at even, or at midnight, or in the morning,’ whether attended with lingering pain, or sudden as the flash of heaven’s bolt, it will be welcome ; for death will be robbed of its ‘sting,’ and the grave stripped of its ‘victory’—yielding back its tenant at the appointed time, quickened to life, indued with immortality, radiant with glory.

With faith and hope in Him who, amid the ravages of the grave, proclaimed himself 'the resurrection and the life,' and who in his own person vanquished the destroyer and 'abolished death,' we will unite in the solemn prayer of Consecration, which devotes this ground forever to its selected and sacred use. And may we, who have now met in the cemetery appropriated to the dead, meet hereafter in the mansions prepared for the blessed ! We meet to-day, my friends, as fellow-pilgrims in the wilderness. Before us is the Jordan of death, and beyond it is the Land of Promise, where the Israel of God shall rest from their wanderings ; whose green palms are ever waving in beauty ; where the Rose of Sharon unfolds its loveliness and exhales its fragrance, and the tabernacle of Shiloh abideth forever. No funeral procession ever moveth among its immortal abodes ; no mournful knell, no note of wailing anguish or sobbing grief, is ever heard amid its glad cadences ; like the 'pure river of water of life,' with sweet and ceaseless murmur, ever glideth its blessed tranquillity. May God grant unto us, each one, an entrance into the Heavenly Canaan ! As one after another, he shall 'change our countenances and send us away,' may we meet again on the celestial mount, in the likeness of our glorified Redeemer, with the robes of victory and the harps of praise !

ORIGINAL HYMN.

BY MRS. M. H. SHERMAN, OF FOXBORO'.

Father, humbly in thy presence,
Gathered 'neath the sylvan shade,
Let us bring the soul's oblation,
Let our hearts on Thee be stayed ;
Here, in nature's beauteous temple,
We would consecrate this ground ;
To thy glory, God of Heaven,
Let our notes of praise resound.
Blessings on our efforts pour,
Father, guide us evermore.

Sacred spot of rural beauty,
Mourners feel thy soothing power
As they thread thy quiet pathways,
At the evening's twilight hour ;
Rock and dell and leaflet gleaming
In the sunlight of the wave,
Floral wreaths, of nature's weaving,
Circle round the hallowed grave.
Blessings on our efforts pour,
Father, guide us evermore.

Woodland songsters softly carol
Forth their notes of praise and love,
While the mourning mother wanders,
Through the cypress-shaded grove ;
Thither, 'neath these branches waving,
Orphaned hearts will oft repair,
Holding sweet commune with nature,
Breathing forth the fervent prayer.
Blessings on their young hearts pour,
Father, guide them evermore.

Autumn's varied hues are changing,
Leaves are falling, one by one,
Thus our earthly friends are gathered,
In the quiet of the tomb ;
When our fleeting days are ended,
To the spirit-land we soar,
There our ransomed souls shall dwell, in
Vernal beauty evermore.
To those loved ones gone before,
Father, guide us evermore.

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